



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Humboldt-Toiyabe
National Forest

February 2014

SCOPING AND NOTICE OF PROPOSED ACTION AND OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT

GREEN SPRINGS MINERALS EXPLORATION PROJECT

**ELY RANGER DISTRICT
WHITE PINE COUNTY, NEVADA**

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INTRODUCTION

The Ely Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is preparing an Environmental Assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) on Ely Gold and Minerals, Inc.'s (EGM's) Green Springs Exploration Project, White Pine County, Nevada. This letter serves as Scoping and Notice of Proposed Action and provides an opportunity to comment on the specifics of the Project. The Project is subject to the Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process under 36 CFR §218. The Project Plan of Operations can be reviewed at the Ely Ranger District Office during normal business hours. Further information is also available from Douglas Powell, Geologist and Project Lead, at (775) 778-6129.

DECISION FRAMEWORK

Based on the environmental analysis and disclosure documented in the Environmental Assessment (EA), the Responsible Official would decide: 1) whether to select the Proposed Action as proposed or modified, or as described in an alternative; 2) what mitigation measures, if needed, would be required; and 3) what monitoring, if any, would be required.

PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

The purpose of and need for the Proposed Action is to identify, locate, and delineate mineral deposits, specifically by exploration drilling, on NFS lands in the Project Area. The statutory right of EGM to explore for mineral resources on federally administered lands is recognized in the General Mining Law of 1872, and is consistent with the Humboldt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan of 1986 (IV-50). Surface management regulations (36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] part 228) require that all mineral exploration, development, and operations activities be conducted in a manner that minimizes adverse environmental impacts on National Forest surface resources (36 CFR 228.8).

LOCATION

The Project is located on the western flank of the White Pine Range in the southwest corner of the historic White Pine Mining District, approximately 40 miles west of Ely, Nevada. The Project is located on National Forest System (NFS) land administered by the United States Forest Service (USFS) in Sections 14, 15, 22, 26, 27, and 34, Township 15 North, Range 57 East, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian. The Project is accessed via U.S. Highway 50, then south on County Road 5 to several unimproved roads that lead to the Project (Figure 1).

PROPOSED PROJECT OVERVIEW

Approximately half of the project area is located within the Pogonip Ridge and Lampson Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs). Activities within the IRAs would include temporary road construction and temporary reopening of reclaimed roads (reconstruction) for exploration drilling, as described in more detail below. Title 36 CFR 294.12 (b)(3) allows for road construction activities within IRAs where operations are inclusive to the General Mining Law of 1872.

EGM plans to conduct mineral exploration activities in a phased manner. Exploration activities in the project area would include the temporary construction of exploration roads and drill sites, reconstruction of previously reclaimed roads, maintenance of existing roads, and the utilization of overland travel routes. EGM plans to conduct exploration in phases for a total of approximately 75 acres of surface disturbance within an 801 acre Project Area, over a period of approximately five years, depending upon economic conditions and ongoing exploration results. Phase I Project activities would include the construction of exploration roads, drill sites, and sumps, and the utilization of overland travel routes and laydown areas. EGM also plans activities under subsequent phases for the collection of baseline data for future operations should the exploration phase define an economically feasible mineral deposit.

PROPOSED ACTION SUMMARY

The Proposed Action would consist of exploration activities within the Project Area as described in Table 1. Phase I Project activities would include the construction of temporary exploration roads, drill sites and sumps, and the utilization of overland travel routes and laydown areas. Phase I surface disturbance totals approximately 3.5 acres. All sensitive resources would be avoided; therefore, the exact location of each type of disturbance may change. This flexibility is necessary to evaluate an exploration project and avoid impacts to sensitive resources. The remaining 71.5 acres of surface disturbance will be identified under subsequent phases and will also include trenching and bulk sampling, the installation of ground water monitoring wells, and the installation and operation of a meteorological station. The location of surface disturbance under subsequent phases cannot be specified at this time because the specific locations for the subsequent activities would be based on the results of Phase I activities. The total surface disturbance proposed under Phase I and the Subsequent Phases is outlined in Table 1.

Reclamation would include concurrent reclamation to minimize total project disturbance. Reclamation would consist of recontouring to approximate original contours and reseeding with a USFS approved certified weed-free seed mix. Final reclamation would be completed within two years of project completion, temporary shutdown, non-use or abandonment.

Table 1: Proposed Surface Disturbance within the Project Area

Exploration Activity	Surface Disturbance (acres)		
	Proposed Phase I	Subsequent Phases	Total Disturbance
Constructed Roads	1.2	30.0	31.2
Overland Travel	0.6	7.9	8.5
Constructed Drill Sites	1.5	29.2	30.7
Laydown Area	0.2	0.2	0.4
Ground Water Monitoring Wells	0.0	1.0	1.0
Trenches and Bulk Sampling	0.0	3.0	3.0
Meteorological Station	0.0	0.2	0.2
Total	3.5	71.5	75.0

ALTERNATIVES

Currently, two alternatives have been identified to be analyzed in detail with further analysis potentially generating other alternatives.

The No Action Alternative: The Plan of Operations would not be approved and EGM would not conduct exploration activities. Conditions at the Project Area would remain as they are now.

The Proposed Action Alternative: EGM's Plan of Operations would be approved and EGM would be authorized to conduct the proposed exploration Project with up to 75 acres of surface disturbance. This alternative would include the proposed activities outlined in the Plan of Operations from EGM and would include environmental protection measures, timing, monitoring, reclamation, and protective resource measures based upon comments from the public, tribes, and the interdisciplinary team during analysis of the Proposed Action.

COMMENTS WELCOME

The USFS is now seeking public comments specific to the proposed Project. There are two purposes for this comment period:

1. To provide opportunity for public participation prior to a decision by the Responsible Official. In addition, submission of comments during this period is required to establish objection eligibility subject to *36 CFR 218.5 and 218.7 subparts (a) and (b)*; and
2. To meet the NEPA requirements for public scoping.

The Project is not authorized under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act; however, the Project is implemented under land management plans and is subject to 36 CFR 218.7 subparts (a) and (b). Instead of an appeal period, there is an objection process before the final decision is made and after the final environmental analysis document and draft decision are mailed (reference 36 CFR 218). In order to be eligible to file an objection, specific written comments related to the Project must be submitted during the Notice of Proposed Action (NOPA) and Opportunity to Comment period.

In development and preparation of the Project, the participation of interested persons, state and local governments, and Native American tribes is encouraged at this time and throughout the process.

How to Comment and Timeframe

Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to object must meet the information requirements of 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B.

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Only those who submit timely and specific written comments regarding the

proposed project during a public comment period established by the responsible official are eligible to file an objection under §218.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of this notice in the Ely Times. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this analysis. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or time frame information provided by any other source. The regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period.

Written comments must be submitted to the Responsible Official for this project (Amery Sifre, Acting District Ranger, Ely Ranger District) at 825 Avenue East, Ely, Nevada 89301; phone (775) 289-5116, fax (775) 289-2132; or you may hand-deliver your comments during normal business hours from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays to 825 Avenue East, Ely, Nevada. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to this email address: comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-ely@fs.fed.us. In cases where no identifiable name is attached to a comment, a verification of identity will be required for objection eligibility. If using an electronic message, a scanned signature is one way to provide verification.

For objection eligibility each individual or representative from each entity submitting timely and specific written comments regarding the proposed project must either sign the comments or verify identity upon request.

Additional Information

The opportunity to comment ends 30 days following the date of publication of this legal notice in the *Ely Times* (Newspaper of Record).

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this Project and will be available for public inspection and will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

For more information on the NEPA process or this Project please contact Amery Sifre, Ely Acting District Ranger at (775) 289-5116 or Douglas Powell, Geologist and Project Lead, at (775) 778-6129.

Attachments: Figure 1 – Project Area Boundary, Land Status, and Access